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MY WITNESS:

A Book of Verse.

BY

WILLIAM WINTER.



BOSTON:

JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY,

LATE TICKNOR & FIELDS, AND FIELDS, OSGOOD, & Co.

1871.

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1871,
BY JAMES R. OSGOOD & CO.,
in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

UNIVERSITY PRESS: WELCH, BIGELOW, & CO.,
CAMBRIDGE.

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To my Wife:

THE INSPIRATION OF WHATEVER IS GENTLE AND
CHEERFUL IN THE SPIRIT OF
THIS BOOK.



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MY WITNESS.







ORGIA :

A SONG OF RUIN.

WHO cares for nothing alone is free.
Sit down, good fellow, and drink with
me.

With a careless heart and a merry eye,
He will laugh at the world as the world goes by.

He laughs at power and wealth and fame ;
He laughs at virtue, he laughs at shame ;

He laughs at hope, and he laughs at fear,
And at memory's dead leaves, crisp and sere :

He laughs at the future, cold and dim, —
Nor earth nor heaven is dear to him.

O that is the comrade fit for me :
He cares for nothing, his soul is free,

Free as the soul of the fragrant wine :
Sit down, good fellow — my heart is thine.

For I heed not custom, creed, nor law ;
I care for nothing that ever I saw.

In every city my cups I quaff,
And over my liquor I riot and laugh.

I laugh like the cruel and turbulent wave ;
I laugh at the church, and I laugh at the grave.

I laugh at joy, and well I know
That I merrily, merrily laugh at woe.

I terribly laugh, with an oath and a sneer,
When I think that the hour of death is near.

For I know that Death is a guest divine,
Who shall drink my blood as I drink this wine.

And He cares for nothing! a king is He!
Come on, old fellow, and drink with me!

With you I will drink to the solemn Past,
Though the cup that I drain should be my last.

I will drink to the phantoms of love and truth;
To ruined manhood and wasted youth.

I will drink to the woman who wrought my woe,
In the diamond morning of Long Ago;

To a heavenly face, in sweet repose;
To the lily's snow and the blood of the rose;

To the splendor, caught from orient skies,
That thrilled in the dark of her hazel eyes, —

Her large eyes, wild with the fire of the south, —
And the dewy wine of her warm, red mouth.

I will drink to the thought of a better time ;
To innocence, gone like a death-bell chime.

I will drink to the shadow of coming doom ;
To the phantoms that wait in my lonely tomb.

I will drink to my soul in its terrible mood,
Dimly and solemnly understood.

And, last of all, to the Monarch of Sin,
Who has conquered that fortress and reigns
within.

My sight is fading, — it dies away, —
I cannot tell — is it night or day.

My heart is burnt and blackened with pain,
And a horrible darkness crushes my brain.

I cannot see you. The end is nigh ;
But — we 'll laugh together before I die.

Through awful chasms I plunge and fall !
Your hand, good fellow ! I die, — that 's all.





LETHE:

A SONG OF REST.

I.

SWEET oblivion, blood of grape,
Let me take thy hue and shape!
Flood this weary heart of mine!
Change it into ruddy wine!
Through my veins, with golden glow,
Fiery spirit, flash and flow!
Deify this clod of clay,
And waft my willing soul away!

II.

Sick and sad my fancies are, —
Tired of peace and tired of war.

Joke of jester, prank of clown
Weigh my heavy eyelids down.
All philosophies are drear ;
Music 's jargon in my ear ;
Endless tides of empty talk
Bubble round me where I walk ;
I am deafened by the din
That the world is wrangling in ;
I am tired of woe and bliss ;
I am sick of all that is !

III.

God of sunrise, purple wine,
Let me lose my soul in thine !
Close my eyes and stop my ears
To all a mortal sees and hears : —
Roll of drums and clash of swords,
Fretful snarl of angry words,
Church and state and bond and free,
Party, creed, and policy,

Tattle, prattle, laugh, and groan,
Crozier, sceptre, flag, and throne,
Foolish press, and grand debate
Which of moles is small or great,
Who shall be prayed for, who shall pray,
And what the foreign critics say.
All avails not; might is right;
Life is vapid, — day is night.

IV.

Sun of rubies, fiery wine,
Burn my being into thine !
So my dream of death shall bless
Memory with forgetfulness.
No more weary, wasting thought
On a past so folly-fraught !
No more dreams of love-lit eyes,
And silken hair, and tender sighs,
And kisses, wild and sweet, that shake
The frame of being ! — poor mistake !

Nor that other, just as poor,—
Toil for praise of sage or boor;
Fire, that burnishes a crown,
Fire, that burns a kingdom down,
Fire, that ravages his breast
Who takes ambition for his guest!
But at last, instead of these,
Sunset cloud, and evening breeze,
Holy starlight shining dim,
Organ wail, and vesper hymn,
Cypress wreath, and asphodels,
Gentle toll of distant bells,—
All that makes the sleeper blest,
In a bed of endless rest.

V.

When this farce of life is o'er,
Are we fretted any more?
Do they rest, I'd like to know,
Under grass or under snow,

Who have gone that quiet way
You and I must go, some day?
If they do, it seems to me
Happy were it thus to be
Sleeping where the blackberries grow,
And the bramble-roses blow,
And the sunshine pours its gold
On mossy rock and woodland old,
While gentle winds and clouds of fleece
And rippling waters whisper — Peace!

VI.

Vain the fancy: nothing dies:
Falling water falls to rise;
Round and round the atoms fly, —
Turf and stone and sea and sky,
Vapor-drop and blood of man, —
In the inexorable plan.
All is motion: nothing dies:
Mystery of mysteries.

VII.

Royal road of blest escape !
Sweet oblivion, blood of grape,
Let me take thy hue and shape !
In thy spirit floating free,
I shall be a revery,
A flitting thought, a fading dream,
A melting cloud, a faint moonbeam,
A breath, a mist, a ghost of light,
To rise and vanish in the night, —
Unsecing all, by all unseen,
And being as I had not been.





THE WHITE FLAG.

I.

BRING poppies for a weary mind
That saddens in a senseless din,
And let my spirit leave behind
A world of riot and of sin, —
In action's torpor deaf and blind.

Bring poppies — that I may forget!

Bring poppies — that I may not learn!
But bid the audacious sun to set,
And bid the peaceful starlight burn
O'er buried memory and regret.

Then shall the slumberous grasses grow
Above the bed wherein I sleep;

While winds I love shall softly blow,
And dews I love shall softly weep,
O'er rest and silence hid below.

Bring poppies, — for this work is vain !
I cannot mould the clay of life.
A stronger hand must grasp the rein,
A stouter arm annul the strife,
A braver heart defy the pain.

Youth was my friend,—but Youth had wings,
And he has flown unto the day,
And left me, in a night of things,
Bewildered, on a lonesome way,
And careless what the future brings.

Let there be sleep! nor any more
The noise of useless deed or word ;
While the free spirit wanders o'er
A sea where not one wave is stirred,
A sea of dreams, without a shore.

II.

Dark Angel, counselling defeat,
I see thy mournful, tender eyes ;
I hear thy voice, so faint, so sweet,
And very dearly should I prize
Thy perfect peace, thy rest complete.

But is it rest to vanish hence,
To mix with earth or sea or air ?
Is death indeed a full defence
Against the tyranny of care ?
Or is it cruellest pretence ?

And if an hour of peace draws nigh,
Shall we, who know the arts of war,
Turn from the field and basely fly,
Nor take what fate reserves us for,
Because we dream 't were sweet to die ?

What shall the untried warriors do,
If we, the battered veterans, fail ?

How strive and suffer and be true,
In storms that make our spirits quail,
Except our valor lead them through ?

Though for ourselves we droop and tire,
Let us at least for them be strong.
'T is but to bear familiar fire ;
Life at the longest is not long,
And peace at last will crown desire.

So, Death, I will not hear thee speak !
But I will labor — and endure
All storms of pain that time can wreak . . .
My flag be white because 't is pure,
And not because my soul is weak !





EGERIA.

THE star I worship shines alone,
In native grandeur set apart ;
Its light, its beauty, all my own,
And imaged only in my heart.

The flower I love lifts not its face
For other eyes than mine to see ;
And, having lost that sacred grace,
'T would have no other charm for me.

The hopes I bear, the joys I feel,
Are silent, secret, and serene ;
Pure is the shrine at which I kneel,
And Purity herself my Queen.

I would not have an impious gaze
 Profane the altar where are laid
My hopes of nobler, grander days,
 By heaven inspired, by earth betrayed.

I would not have the noontide sky
 Pour down its bold, obtrusive light
Where all the springs of feeling lie,
 Deep in the soul's celestial night.

Far from the weary strife and noise,
 The tumult of the great To-Day,
I guard my own congenial joys,
 And keep my own sequestered way.

For all that world is cursed with care ;
 Has nothing holy, nothing dear,
No light, no music anywhere, —
 It will not see, it will not hear.

But Thou, sweet Spirit, viewless Power,
Whom I have loved and trusted long, —
In pleasure's day, in sorrow's hour, —
Muse of my life and of my song ;

Breathe softly, Thou, with peaceful voice,
In my soul's temple, vast and dim !
In thine own perfect joy rejoice,
With morning and with evening hymn !

And though my hopes around me fall
Like rain-drops in a boundless sea,
I will not think I lose them all
While yet I keep my trust in Thee !





LOVE'S IDEAL.

HER young face is good and fair,
Lily-white and rosy-red ;
And the brown and silken hair
Hovers, mist-like, round her head.

And her voice is soft and low,
Clear as music and as sweet ;
Hearing it, you hardly know
Where the sound and silence meet.

All the magic who can tell
Of her laughter and her sighs ?
Or what heavenly meanings dwell
In her kind, confiding eyes ?

Pretty lips, as rubies bright,
Scarcely hide the tiny pearls ;
Little wandering stars of light
Love to nestle in her curls.

All her ways are winning ways,
Full of tenderness and grace ;
And a witching sweetness plays
Fondly o'er her gentle face.

True and pure her soul within, —
Breathing a celestial air !
Evil and the shame of sin
Could not dwell one moment there.

Is it but a vision, this ?
Fond creation of the brain ?
Phantom of a fancied bliss ?
Type of beauty void and vain ?

No! the tides of being roll
Toward a heaven that's yet to be,
Where this idol of my soul
Waits and longs for love and me!





LOVE'S CHOICE.

THE stroller in the pensive field
Doth many a wildering flower descry :
Sometimes to him the Roses yield ;
Sometimes the Lilies feed his eye ;
Sometimes he takes delight in one,
Sometimes in all, sometimes in none.

But when, in dusky woodland ways,
He sees, beside some dreaming stone,
The fresh, untutored Violet raise
Her pleading eyes for him alone,
Then makes his heart its final choice,
And Nature speaks in Passion's voice.

The stroller beauty's garden through, —
By many a wayward impulse led, —
Sometimes is charmed by gold and blue,
Sometimes by brown and mantling red ;
Sometimes proud dame and maiden small
Please just the same, or not at all.

But when, remote from pleasure's whirl,
He sees, at home's sequestered shrine,
The ardent, cheerful, guileless girl,
Of mortal mould, but soul divine, —
Too good, too beautiful, to know
How fair her worth and beauty show ;

Then all his roving fancies pause,
Entranced by this o'erwhelming grace ;
It rules him by celestial laws,
It lights a splendor in his face :
'T is the best good that Heaven can give :
He wins it — and begins to live.



LOVE'S QUESTION.

BECAUSE love's sigh is but a sigh,
Doth it the less love's heart disclose?

Because the rose must fade and die,

Is it the less the lovely rose?

Because black night must shroud the day,

Shall the brave sun no more be gay?

Because chill autumn frights the birds,

Shall we distrust that spring will come?

Because sweet words are only words,

Shall love forevermore be dumb?

Because our bliss is fleeting bliss,

Shall we who love forbear to kiss?

Because those eyes of gentle mirth
Must some time cease my heart to thrill,
Because the sweetest voice on earth
Sooner or later must be still,
Because its idol is unsure,
Shall my strong love the less endure ?

Ah no ! let lovers breathe their sighs,
And roses bloom, and music sound,
And passion burn on lips and eyes,
And pleasure's merry world go round :
Let golden sunshine flood the sky,
And let me love, or let me die !





LOVE'S TRIUMPH.

SURGE up in wanton waves to-day,
Ye Memories of a restless Past !
In shine and shadow, glance and play, —
This golden moment is your last.

Float, Phantoms, o'er a sapphire sea, —
Remembered joy, remembered pain,
Passions and fears that used to be,
But never can be mine again.

Sweet Visions, faded long ago,
So beautiful, and once so dear, —
That wrought my bliss, that wrought my woe, —
Your welcome and farewell are here.

For now no more can fancy wile
My steadfast soul with dreams untrue.
I give you each a parting smile,
I give you all a glad adieu.

Henceforth for me the Past is dead,
And buried deep in Lethean waves.
Firm is the ground whereon I tread,
That will not know the shape of graves.

As one whose soul, in second birth,
Attains its natural height and scope,
I spurn away the dust of earth,
I scale the radiant peaks of hope.

The sunshine wraps me in its arms,
North-winds of power around me blow,
And heaven's ablaze with starry charms
To bless the path whereon I go.

For mine is now the ardent truth
And secret of the lover's kiss ;
The valley of immortal youth ;
The sacred mountain-height of bliss.





LOVE'S QUEEN.

HE loves not well whose love is bold !
I would not have thee come too nigh.
The sun's gold would not seem pure gold
Unless the sun were in the sky :
To take him thence and chain him near
Would make his beauty disappear.

He keeps his state, — do thou keep thine,
And shine upon me from afar !
So shall I bask in light divine
That falls from Love's own guiding star.
So shall thy eminence be high,
And so my passion shall not die.

But all my life shall reach its hands
Of lofty longing toward thy face,
And be as one who speechless stands
In rapture at some perfect grace.
My love, my hope, my all, shall be
To look to heaven and look to thee.

Thine eyes shall be the heavenly lights ;
Thy voice shall be the summer breeze,
What time it sways, on moonlit nights,
The murmuring tops of leafy trees ;
And I will touch thy beauteous form
In June's red roses, rich and warm.

But thou thyself shalt come not down
From that pure region far above ;
But keep thy throne and wear thy crown,
Queen of my heart and queen of love !
A monarch in thy realm complete,
And I a monarch — at thy feet !



THREE PICTURES.

BESIDE THE SEA.

I.

THEY walked beside the summer sea,
And watched the slowly dying sun ;
And “ O,” she said, “ come back to me,
My love, my own, my only one ! ”
But, while he kissed her fears away,
The gentle waters kissed the shore,
And, sadly whispering, seemed to say,
He ’ll come no more ! he ’ll come no more !

II.

Alone beside the autumn sea,
She watched the sombre death of day ;

And "O," she said, "remember me,
And love me, darling, far away!"
A cold wind swept the watery gloom,
And, darkly whispering on the shore,
Sighed out the secret of his doom,—
He 'll come no more! he 'll come no more!

III.

In peace beside the winter sea,
A white grave glimmers in the moon;
And waves are fresh, and clouds are free,
And shrill winds pipe a careless tune.
One sleeps beneath the dark blue wave,
And one upon the lonely shore;
But, joined in love beyond the grave,
They part no more! they part no more!





AFTER ALL.

1862.

THE apples are ripe in the orchard,
The work of the reaper is done,
And the golden woodlands redden
In the blood of the dying sun.

At the cottage door the grandsire
Sits, pale, in his easy-chair,
While a gentle wind of twilight
Plays with his silver hair.

A woman is kneeling beside him ;
A fair young head is prest,
In the first wild passion of sorrow,
Against his aged breast.

And far from over the distance
The faltering echoes come,
Of the flying blast of trumpet
And the rattling roll of drum.

Then the grandsire speaks, in a whisper, —
“The end no man can see ;
But we give him to his country,
And we give our prayers to Thee.” . . .

The violets star the meadows,
The rose-buds fringe the door,
And over the grassy orchard
The pink-white blossoms pour.

But the grandsire's chair is empty,
The cottage is dark and still,
There 's a nameless grave on the battle-field,
And a new one under the hill.

And a pallid, tearless woman
By the cold hearth sits, alone ;
And the old clock in the corner
Ticks on with a steady drone.





THE MERRY MONARCH.

I.

IT comes into my mind, — in a genial mood,
When the worlds of my being, without and
within,
Are quietly happy in all that is good,
Unclouded by care and untempted by sin, —
If the gods would but grant me my dearest
desire,
As I fancy, sometimes, they 're inclining to
do,
That I should n't sit here, looking into the
fire,
And dreaming, my love, as I 'm dreaming
of you.

II.

Nor should I be thinking, as sometimes I am, —

If the gods had but made me the thing I
would be, —

That a station of rank, in a world full of sham,

Were a pleasant and suitable station for me.

Nor should I be striving, with heart and with
brain,

For the laurel that poets are anxious to
wear, —

That dubious guerdon for labor and pain,

That sorry exchange for the natural hair.

III.

No ! I never should care, if I had my own way,

For the storm or the sunshine, the Yes or
the No ;

But, quietly careless, and perfectly gay,

I could let the world go as it wanted to go.

I should ask neither riches, nor station, nor
power ;

They are chances, they happen, and there
is an end ;

But a heart that beats merrily every hour
Is a god's richest gift, is a man's truest
friend.

IV.

And that's what I'd have ! For that blessing
I pray !

A spirit so gentle and easy and bright,
It should gladden with sunshine the sunniest
day,

And with magical splendor illumine the
night.

I could envy no potentate under the sun,
However sublime might that potentate be ;
For I'd live, the illustrious Monarch of Fun,
And the rest of the world should be happy
with me.

V.

I 'd be gold in the sunshine and silver in
showers ;

I 'd be rainbows, and clouds all of purple and
pearl ;

And the fairies of fun should laugh out of the
flowers,

And the jolly old earth should be all in a whirl !

The brooks should trill music, the leaves dance
in glee,

And old ocean should bellow with surly de-
light :

O, but would n't it be a tempestuous spree,

If the gods did but grant me my kingdom
to-night !

VI.

And I think it will come, — that succession of
mine,

That crown with the opals of jollity set ;

And the joy in my soul will be something
divine

When I finally teach myself how to forget ;
Forget all of sorrow in which I 've a part,
All the dreams that allure and the hopes that
betray, —

Contented to wait, with a right merry heart,
For a home and a grave at the end of the
play.





OLD TIMES.

ROSY days of youth and fancy !
Happy hours of Long Ago !
Ah, the playful, pictured memories, —
Let us catch them as they flow !

Galaxies of blue-eyed Marys,
With a Julia, or a Jane,
Or a troop of little Lauras,
Blush and laugh and romp again.

Moonlight meetings, evening rambles,
When the night was still around,
And a sweet voice, softly murmuring,
Or a kiss, the only sound.

These remember, — and remember
How the kind stars shone above,
Keeping, in their mellow splendor,
Watch and ward upon our love.

Youth is as a diamond dawning, —
Bold it breaks to gorgeous day ;
Heavenly lights of power and beauty
Glance and gleam along its way.

Far within the mighty future
There be solemn voices heard ;
Shaped to many a stately anthem,
Floats the music of a word.

But that music, in the present,
Softly droops, with sad decay,
Till its echo, in the spirit,
Faints, and fails, and dies away.

Green be, then, the tender memory
Of the Past, forever sped,
So that youth may be immortal,
Though its days and dreams are dead !





GEORGE ARNOLD.

GREENWOOD, NOVEMBER 13, 1865.

BENEATH the still November sky,
With Nature's peace and beauty blest,
We put our selfish sorrow by,
And laid our loved one down to rest.

Rest — in the morning of his days !

Rest — when his heart had just begun
To feel the warmth of all men's praise,
The radiance of the rising sun !

Rest — to a strong and stately mind,

That rose all common flights above ! .

Rest — to a heart as true and kind
As ever glowed with human love !

And round him, dimly through our grief,
In every natural sound we heard —
In whispering grass, and rustling leaf,
And sighing wind — the same sweet word :

Rest ! And we did not break the spell,
By holy Nature cast around
The fading form we left to dwell
Forever in her hallowed ground.

No hymns were sung, no prayers were said,
Save what our loving hearts could say,
When, gazing mutely on the dead,
We blessed him ere we turned away :

Back to the round of daily care
That seems so vacant to us now,
Remembering what repose was there,
What peace, upon his marble brow.

And so we left him, — nevermore
To see, in sunshine or in rain,
The semblance of the form he wor.
Whose loss has steeped our souls in pain.

But, long as skies of autumn smile,
And long as clouds of autumn weep,
Or autumn leaves their splendors pile
In sorrow o'er their poet's sleep ;

And long as violets grace the spring,
Or June-born roses blush and blow,
Or pale stars shine, or south-winds sing,
Or tides of summer ebb and flow ;

So long shall live their poet's name,
When rest these broken hearts of ours, —
Embalmed in love, surpassing fame,
With stars and leaves and clouds and
flowers !



BEYOND THE DARK.

THERE 's a region afar from earth
Should be very happy to-day,
For a sweet soul, ripe for its birth,
Has gone from this world away.

And I think, as I sit alone,
While the night is falling around,
Of a cold, white, gleaming stone,
And a long, lone grassy mound ;

And of what rests under the sod, —
The poor, pale face ; the still brain,
Left awfully still by the spirit of God
That has gone to Him again ;

The eyes that will shine no more,
The hands that have done their task ; —
And my heart is heavy and sore,
And my mind is hungry to ask

If all, indeed, be well
In the realms beyond the dark ;
What secret the pallid lips could tell
Of that body so quiet and stark.

But there comes a murmur of trees,
That wave their arms, and bring
Buds, blossoms, and leaves to shake in the
breeze,
From spring to spring ;

And they whisper that all is well,
For the same Hand guides us all,
Whether 't is seen in a man's death-knell,
Or in the leaves that fall.

And so many have gone before,
That the voice of another sphere
Floats often from over a sable shore,
And pierces the mist of fear.

O tender heart that is still,
You will falter with trouble no more,
Nor know of the good or the ill
Of a frantic world's uproar !

Nor heed the great or the small
Of a strange, bewildering life,
That often seems dust and ashes all,
And is mostly a vapid strife.

For the end is the peace of grass,
And God's peace, ever to be :
The one for us to feel as we pass,
The other enshrining thee.

Clouds sail, and waters flow,
And our souls must journey on ;
But it cannot be ill to go
The way that thou hast gone.





BEAUTY.

I HAD a dream, one glorious summer night,
In the rich bosom of imperial June.

Languid I lay, upon an odorous couch,
Golden with amber, festooned wildly o'er
With crimson roses, and the longing stars
Wept tears of love upon their clustered leaves.
Above me soared the azure vault of heaven,
Vast and majestic ; cinctured with that path
Whereby, perchance, the sea-born Venus found
Her way to higher spheres ; that path which
seems

A coronet of silver, gemmed with stars,
And bound upon the forehead of young night.

There, as I lay, the musical south-wind
Shook all the roses into murmurous life,
And poured their fragrance o'er me in a shower
Of crimson mist; and softly, through the mist,
Came a low, sweet, enchanting melody,
A far-off echo from a land of dreams,
Which with delicious languor filled the air,
And steeped in bliss the senses and the soul.

Then rose a shape, — a dim and ghostly shape,
Whereto no feature was, nor settled form, —
A shadowy splendor, seeming as it came
A pearly summer cloud shot through and
through

With faintest rays of sunset; yet within
A spirit dwelt; and, floating from within,
A murmur trembled sweetly into words: —

I am the ghost of a most lovely dream,
Which haunted, in old days, a poet's mind.

And long he sought for, wept, and prayed for
me ;

And searched through all the chambers of his
soul,

And searched the secret places of the earth,

The lonely forest and the lonely shore,

And listened to the voices of the sea,

What time the stars shone out, and midnight
cold

Slept on the dark waves whispering at his feet ;

And sought the mystery in a human form,

Amid the haunts of men, and found it not ;

And looked in woman's fond, bewikdering eyes,

And mirrored there his own, and saw no sign :

But only in his sleep I came to him,

And gave him fitful glimpses of my face,

Whereof he after sang in sweetest words ;

Then died, and came to me. But evermore,

Through lonely days and wakeful, haunted
nights,

A life of star-lit gloom, do poets seek
To snatch the mystic veil that covers me,
And evermore they grasp the empty air.
For only in their dreams I come to them,
And give them fitful glimpses of my face,
And lull them, siren-like, with words of hope
That promise, some time, to their ravished eyes,
Beauty, the secret of the universe,
God's thought, that gives the soul eternal peace.

Then the voice ceased, and only on my ears
The shaken roses murmured. and the wind.





MY PALACES

THEY rose in beauty on the plains
Through which my childhood danced in
glee,

When roses wreathed my idle chains,
And holy angels talked with me.

They rose sublime on mountain heights
Whereto my ardent youth aspired, —
Through silver days and golden nights,
Ere yet my heart grew dull and tired.

Their stately towers were all aflame
With rosy hues of morning light,

For hope and love and power and fame
Burned on their peaks and made them bright.

Now, brown and level fields expand
Around me, as I hold my way
Through barren hills on either hand,
And under skies of sober gray.

No radiant towers in distance rise,
On soaring mountains strong and glad ;
No gorgeous banners flaunt the skies, —
But all the scene is calm and sad.

Yet here and there, along the plain,
A flower lights up the fading grass ;
And whispering wind and rustling rain
Make gentle music as I pass.

And now and then a happy face,
And now and then a merry thought,

Give to the scene a pensive grace,
The sweeter that it comes unsought.

And, looking past all earthly ill,
I know there comes an hour of rest, —
In a dark palace, lowly, still,
And sacred to the weary guest.





THE FIFTH ACT.

IN A DRAMA OF CITY LIFE.

HOW bleak and dreary the streets are!
'T is a wild and lonesome night
And the air is full of voices, —
I shudder with cold and fright.

Ah me, for a little fire !
I will creep here under the cart.
Something whispers of patience ;
But I 'm cold at my very heart.

What is it there, in the shadow,
That wavers and beckons so ?
Nothing Dear little Nelly —
Dead, years and years ago !

Does she know that her poor old father
Is dying here in the street, —
Frozen, ragged, and hungry,
With not a morsel to eat ?

Sweet Nelly ! I know she loved me.
I remember her voice, her smile.
She is gone. Ah well, I shall see her,
Perhaps, in a little while.

How wet and cold is the pavement !
I could pity my own white hair.
Alas ! if my heart were younger, —
But only ashes are there.

Is it cold in the grave, I wonder ?
Ah, the cruel and pitiless storm !
No matter ; 't is all that 's left me ;
Thank God if it 's only warm.



THE OUTCAST.

THIS is the place where he brought her
home, —

Home, — but not to his heart, I know :
For it cannot be but her memories roam
To the first and the true love, long ago !
Noble and lovely and wretched bride,
Doomed, in her gorgeous palace of stone,
Loveless forever, to sit by his side,
And yet be, for ever and ever, alone !

Noble and beautiful spirit of love !

Well, I could wish you were happy, — though
I stand out here, while the stars above
Are as white and cold as the ground below.

I am glad that the splendor is all your own ;
I do not desire it — ah, not I ;
But am well content, at the foot of your throne,
To lie down here in the street, and die.

Perhaps you would see me then — who knows ?
Perhaps you would see, in my haggard face,
Whence they have risen — your subtle woes,
And the something that saddens your stately
grace.

Perhaps — ah me, I am bold indeed ! —
Perhaps you would touch me ! Heart and
brain !

I am sure it would make the old wound bleed,
If it did not wake me to life again !

They say I 'm a drunkard now, and a knave ;
That I riot and revel, by day and night ;
And they 're hoping, too, that I 'll dig my
grave,

And get forever out of their sight.

'T is a hard, hard world ; but I think sometimes, —

When I think at all, — could it only know
The bitter root of my follies and crimes,
That it would n't be eager to hate me so.

No matter ; I love you all the same.

'T was a faithful heart that you threw away.
I can say it now, and with nothing of shame,
For I shall not live till another day.
I can say, though the night of grief was long,
That the light of morning struggles through ;
And, lifted out of my sorrow and wrong,
If I cannot live, I can die, for you !





ACCOMPLICES.

BLACK rocks upon the dreadful coast,
Mutter no more my hidden crime !

I hear, far off, your sullen boast,
But I defy you ! 't is not time !

You cannot tell our secret yet ;
The trusty sea must keep its dead,
And many suns arise and set,
Before that awful word is said.

I am but young ; I 've all the grace
Of life and love and beauty now :
There 's not a wrinkle on my face,
There 's not a shadow on my brow.

I cannot bear the darksome grave !

I will not leave the cheerful sun !

Rave on ! in storm and midnight rave,

For years and years, till all is done.

Till these brown locks are changed to gray ;

Till these clear eyes are dim and old ;

Not yet, not yet the fatal day

When all that horror must be told !

But, then — gnash all your jagged teeth,

And howl for vengeance ! I will come ;

And that same cruel pit beneath

Shall yawn, and gulf me to my home.

To-day — forbear, nor mutter more !

The sky is dark, and dark the sea,

And all the land, from shore to shore,

Is hideous with your horrid glee.



PREDESTINED.

A CALM, cold face, as white and clear
As marble, and as passionless :
Eyes darkly sad, that tell no fear,
No hope, no pleasure, no distress :

A smile, that seems o'er all to sleep
As sleeps a sunbeam on a stone ;
A quiet voice, but soft and deep,
And full of music, every tone :

A courtly manner, — he is true
To social usage, and will pay
To every one the proper due
Of graceful, stately courtesy : —

Behold, an awful thought it is
That such a ghastly, gaunt despair
Can wear a shape so grand as this,
A face so noble and so fair !

For that is not a common grief
Which tears his heart and burns his brain
Who feels eternity too brief
For his tremendous trance of pain ;

Whose soul endures infernal woes,
Enchained by some infernal spell ;
Who knows not peace, but only knows
The lurid, withering fires of hell !





RUE.

THE autumn wind is moaning in the
leaves,

And the long grass is rustling on my grave :
Ah, would you have me think your heart now
grieves

For her you would not save ?

For I am dead ; know you not I am dead ?

Why will you haunt me in my grave to-night,
Standing above and listening overhead,

Where I am buried deep and out of sight ?

Have you not wine and music, in your home,
And the fair form and eyes so pure and
proud

With love of you ? and wherefore do you come
To vex me, lying silent in my shroud ?

Seek your new love ! She calls you, and the
tears

Are warm on her pale face, and her young
breast

Is full of doubt and sorrow, — for she hears
Low whispered words that startle her from
rest.

In from the night ! the storm begins to stir.

I will be near, and ghostly eyes shall see
How you will kiss her lips and say to her,
“Thine always, love,” — as once you said to
me.





CHRISTMAS VERSES.

MERRY voices, have your way!
Thrill us, lovely, laughing eyes!
Turn December into May,
Underneath these frosty skies!

Shake out all your sunny curls,
Golden-shadowed in their flow,
Romping boys and rosy girls,
And skip gayly, as ye go!

Laugh, ye grown-up children, too!
What though, sober in your glee,
Sweet old memories glimmer through,
Of the days that used to be?

Twine your brows with myrtle leaves,
If the roses all are dead :
'T is a thankless heart that grieves
Over days of pleasure fled.

There are buds that yet shall ope,
There are flowers that yet shall blow,
Sweeter than the faded hope,
Or the dream of Long Ago :

Buds of promise, rich and rare ;
Flowers, the holy types of bliss ;
Opening in a purer air
And a gentler clime than this.

Ring the joy-bells, all around !
Hail the sacred Christmas morn !
For the peace of life is found,
And the hope of heaven is born.

Peace — for every weary heart,

Hope — for every struggling soul,

Joy — that never can depart,

Love — to consecrate the whole.





TWO POETS.

READ AT THE BROUGHAM FESTIVAL, AT THE ASTOR HOUSE,
NEW YORK, APRIL 4, 1869.

I.

ONCE, where the Alpine hills arise
In glad desire to meet the day,
There wandered, under summer skies,
A youth as glad and free as they.

Serenely sweet, his gentle face
Could charm and comfort and subdue ;
And friends he found in every place,
And every friend he found was true.

At noonday, resting in the shade,
At eve, beside the cottage door,

His songs he sang, his flute he played,
And laughed, and talked his wanderings
o'er.

The birds made music round his way;
In music spoke the answering streams;
And all the world was lapped in May,
And peopled from a land of dreams.

He scattered pearls where'er he trod,
Sweet fancy to pure thought allied;
And they who sow these pearls of God,—
They are not gone although they died.

He passed away, his work complete,
A book of gold to keep his fame. —
Forever stainless, bright, and sweet
Is GOLDSMITH'S dear, immortal name!

II.

The same green isle that gave him birth,
In after-time, inspired anew,
Sends forth a soul of kindred worth,
A mind as clear, a heart as true.

He walks the world through brilliant years,
In trouble as in triumph, gay ;
He wakes our laughter, wins our tears,
And lightly charms our cares away.

In him conjoined once more we view
High powers to conquer and command :
The heart to feel, the hand to do, —
The Irish heart, the Irish hand.

Too proud a man to cringe and fawn ;
Too plain a man for trick and game ;
Too great to put his soul in pawn,
And flourish on the fruits of shame.

Haply he misses golden gain, —

But his the wealth that 's prized above,
(Precious forever! without stain!)

Honor, and dear and faithful love!

Our manly love is not the least

Of all the laurel that he wears:

To-night he sits with us, at feast:

JOHN BROUGHAM is the name he bears.

God bless that name, and keep it bright!

A beacon, in these evil days,

Of one who kept his conscience white,

Through troublous scenes and devious ways.

And when at last (far hence the day!)

His work is done, his story told,

Be that dear name inscribed for aye

In Fame's immortal book of gold!



ROSEMARY.

“That’s for remembrance.”

THE moonbeams on the water sleep
In breathing light ;
And tender thoughts and memories keep
My soul to-night.

Shades of sweet hours forever gone
Come all unsought,
And waves of mournful joy dance on
The stream of thought.

A dreamy influence seems to rise
From other years —
A solemn bliss that dims the eyes
With happy tears.

Life wears the glow of rosy grace
That once it wore,
And smiles are lit on many a face
That smiles no more.

The gentle friends I used to greet,
All, all are here :
All forms are fair, all voices sweet,
All memories dear.

All happy thoughts, all glorious dreams,
That once were mine,
Rise in the tender light that beams
From Auld Lang Syne.

But something in the heart is wrong, —
The joyous sway,
The spirit, and the voice of song
Have died away.

These winds that on their cloudy cars
Sweep through the sky,
These wandering, watching, deathless stars,
My prayer deny.

These low, sweet murmurs from the land
And from the sea,
These waves that kiss the silver sand
Speak not to me.

And not to me one voice shall speak
Forevermore,
Though the same waves in beauty break
On the same shore.

Alas ! to youthful hearts alone,
That love her well,
Dear Nature makes her secrets known,
And yields her spell.

To them her heavenly songs are sung
Of love and peace,
But when the heart's no longer young,
Those voices cease.

Shine stars, break waves, and murmur blast,
And night-dews, weep!
To wait is left me, and at last
The dreamless sleep.





A Z R A E L .

C O M E with a smile, when come thou must,
Evangel of the world to be,
And touch and glorify this dust, —
This shuddering dust that now is me, —
And from this prison set me free !

Long in those awful eyes I quail,
That gaze across the grim profound :
Upon that sea there is no sail,
Nor any light nor any sound
From the far shore that girds it round :

Only — two still and steady rays,
That those twin orbs of doom o’ertop ;

Only — a quiet, patient gaze
That drinks my being, drop by drop,
And bids the pulse of Nature stop.

Come with a smile, auspicious friend,
To usher in the eternal day !
Of these weak terrors make an end,
And charm the paltry chains away
That bind me to this timorous clay !

And let me know my soul akin
To sunrise and the winds of morn,
And every grandeur that has been
Since this all-glorious world was born,
Nor longer droop in my own scorn.

Come, when the way grows dark and chill !
Come, when the baffled mind is weak,
And in the heart that voice is still
Which used in happier days to speak,
Or only whispers sadly meek.

Come with a smile that dims the sun !
With pitying heart and gentle hand !
And waft me, from a work that 's done,
To peace that waits on thy command,
In God 's mysterious better land.





SPRAY.

I. — CHARITY.

SHOULD tender friendship keep the rhym-
er's name,

May this be said of me, when I am gone :

Weak was his will, — therefore he suffered
much,

In the rude warfare of this stormy world ;

Yet, striving to be strong, in patient toil,

And knowing his own weakness and his sin,

Was gentle to the faults of other men.

II. — PRESENTIMENT.

I know not what unholy spell

Weights on my heart and binds my brow ;

But only — there is nothing well,
And nothing as it should be now.
I know not if there be despair
In such a wayward mood as this ;
I only know that something fair
Was, and is not, yet ever is.

III. — A NIGHT SKY.

This canopy which overhangs the earth
Is like the broad plain of a holy life,
And the bright stars which glitter in the arch
Mean the good deeds whereby 't is sanctified.

IV. — A RELIC.

I would not give this little flower,
Withered and wasted though it be,
For the supremest bliss of power,
Or fortune's proudest pageantry.

For in this little flower I hold
A charm from every sin to save ;
And when at last my heart is cold,
I trust to wear it in my grave.

V. — FADING HOPE.

Hope's sweet day is wellnigh dead ;
Fast its radiant dream has fled ;
And my youth is almost sped,
Sunset floods the west.
Sunset shadows wrap my soul,
And a little time shall roll
One dark cloud above the whole ;
Death shall give me rest.

VI. — THE HEART'S ANCHOR.

Think of me as your friend, I pray,
And call me by a loving name :
I will not care what others say,
If only you remain the same.

I will not care how dark the night,
I will not care how wild the storm ;
Your love will fill my heart with light,
And shield me close and keep me warm.

Think of me as your friend, I pray,
For else my life is little worth :
So shall your memory light my way,
Although we meet no more on earth.
For while I know your faith secure,
I ask no happier fate to see ;
Thus to be loved by one so pure
Is honor rich enough for me.

VII. — DEATH.

He who dwells overmuch on death
Misses true life and goes astray.
We are not bounded by our breath,
Nor are we prisoned in decay,
When the high soul has gone away.

VIII. — THE COMFORTER.

Him most I honor who can make us wise,
 Patient in trouble, steadfast to the end ;
 Arching our lives with ever-cloudless skies,
 And making death itself a tender friend.
 For what, in all this world of strife and pain,
 Is sweet, is permanent, but tranquil faith
 That through our toil and suffering we shall
 gain
 Triumphant rest within the gates of death !

IX. — EREBUS.

There 's a mossy, sunken grave,
 In the solemn land of dreams,
 All alone ;
 Where the dusky branches wave
 O'er the banks of sable streams,
 With a moan :

A dull sky spans it overhead
Like a tomb ;
The wan stars glimmer far away
In the gloom ;
And a pallid moon gleams
On the haunts of the dead,
Where the ghouls and the demons play.
And the souls that wander here
See each other very clear ;
And remember, — but weep not !
Remember, — but sleep not !
Remember, — but cannot pray !

X. — BLACK AND BLUE.

Here 's a health to the lass with the merry black
eyes !
Here 's a health to the lad with the blue
ones !

Here 's a health to first love, as it sparkles and
flies,

And here 's joy to the hearts that are true
ones!

Yes, — joy to the hearts that are tender and
true,

With affection that nothing can smother!
To the eyes of the one that are brilliant and
blue,

And the merry black eyes of the other!

Mind you this, now, my laddie, with sweet eyes
of blue,

That, however the graces invite you,
There is nothing for you in this world that will
do,

But a pair of black eyes to delight you!
And mind *you*, my gay lassie, whose dear eyes
are black,

In a pair of blue eyes to discover

The pure light of affection you never should lack,
And you 'll always be true to your lover !

Long, long shall your eyes sparkle back an arch
kiss

To the eyes that live but to behold you ;
Long, long shall the spell of a mutual bliss
In a heaven of comfort enfold you !
And forever to you shall that poet be wise,
Whose sweet thought is the truest of true
ones, —

That the answering lustre of merry black eyes
Is the life of a pair of true blue ones.

XI. — FREE AND EASY.

How blest his heart who knows no part
In all the cares that be !
Who sails beneath a summer sky,
Upon a summer sea !

No sorry care frowns anywhere,
 To fright away his glee ;
 O, is it not a happy lot,
 So merry and so free !

In idle ways his careless days
 Fly over, one by one ;
 And when one hour of pleasure 's flown,
 Another is begun.
 O, is it not a happy lot,
 So merry and so free,
 To sail beneath a summer sky,
 Upon a summer sea !

And I am he whose heart is free
 From longing and from woe ;
 I do not care what might have been,
 Nor how the world may go !
 Nor hopes nor fears nor smiles nor tears
 Are anything to me,

For I sail beneath a summer sky,
Upon a summer sea !

XII. — THE LAST SCENE.

Here she lieth, white and chill ;
Put your hand upon her brow ;
Her sad heart is very still,
And she does not know you now.

Ah, the grave 's a quiet bed ;
She will sleep a pleasant sleep,
And the tears that you may shed
Will not wake her, — therefore weep !

Weep, — for you have wrought her woe ;
Mourn, — she mourned and died for you :
Ah, too late we come to know
What is false and what is true.

XIII. — CHOSEN.

Warm winds of joy caress her face,
Rich waves of music round her roll,
And Nature glows with novel grace,
Responsive to the awakened soul.

Wide open to the glorious sun
She lifts clear eyes of perfect trust,
Assured that when this life is done
It ends not in the idle dust.

The earth puts on a gladder light,
In many a new-born grace displayed ;
And, humbled at the wondrous sight,
She prays, as when a child she prayed.

The pitying eyes of Heavenly Love
Have seen her where she walked alone,
And, bending from His throne above,
The Father claims her for His own.

XIV. — A CREED.

There 's change in times, in fashions, manners,
speech ;

There 's change in parties, governments, and
creeds ;

There 's the exchange, whose poisonous fingers
reach

The heart of commerce, and it straightway
bleeds ;

There 's change in what we learn, and what
we teach ;

There 's change in what one writes, and
what he reads ;

There 's change in everything, or — not to
mock it —

In everything except a poor man's pocket.

I like experience, though, howe'er it tells,
For or against me ; all is one at last.

These hearts of ours are much like soundless
wells,

Wherein the shining pearls of truth are cast ;
And very happy he who rightly spells

The sweet and bitter lessons of the past,
For only thus he comes himself to know, —
Which all his knowledge is, as Pope will
show.

I like experience, therefore. I have had

My share of blows and bruises ; but I think —
Let it be good, indifferent, or bad —

The “ wine of life ” ’s a very decent drink.
Yet, if a man lives on, and don’t go mad,

When finally he trembles on the brink
Of death, I judge, though certain people threat it,
The chances are that he will not regret it.

I relish self-dissection ; for I woo

All knowledge, and this process finds it out.

I love to judge between the false and true ;

Blow off the dust of romance and of doubt ;
Break error's crust and let the sunlight
through ;

Ope mystery's doors ; give bigotry the knout :
I love the good, the beautiful, the great,
And all the noblest hopes in man's estate.

I love to laugh when other people sneer ;

Am fond of pleasure, nor averse to pain ;
I have found wisdom, sometimes, in a tear ;
I have been gay, and sad, and gay again.

I love my sorrows, though they've cost me dear.

I love my dinner, but did not complain
When I had none, which sometimes was the
case ;

For even that may be a means of grace.

I love my friends, — they're mostly books, —
and they

Are always faithful; at my foes I laugh.
What Mr. Blank and Mrs. Grundy say
Affects me not. I love at times to quaff
A health to those who love me; and I pray
That honest men may not be caught with
chaff.
So in a patient, dreamy way I live,—
Get what I can, and give when I can give.





THE WORLD'S MARTYR.

AN ALLEGORY.

I.

ORDAINED to work the heavenly will,
An angel cometh, sent from far ;
And Nature feels another thrill,
And love has lit another star.

II.

At sweetest rest
Upon his mother's breast
Heaven's little wanderer lies ;
While that fond mother dreams of Paradise,
And talks with angels, looking in his eyes.

III.

Earth seemed more beautiful because of him.

In woodlands dim

Rare flowers were born ;

And limpid, chattering brooks —

The Poet's earliest and brightest books —

Spake of a new delight

Unto the morn ;

And, in the night, —

When fairies, sporting underneath the moon,

In airy glee,

Kept revelry,

Making the darkness beautifully bright

As brightest noonday in the heart of June, —

Every wavelet laughed, and after

Seemed to chase its own delicious laughter,

Till, spent

In emulous merriment,

It fell asleep in some secluded, cool,

Translucent pool.

On meadows gemmed with daisies
The wild bee swooned, in mazes
Of languid odor, more bewitching far
Than orient perfumes are.

All natural objects seemed to catch a rare
and precious gleam.

The happy little birds
Uttered melodious words,
All indistinct, though sweet, to mortal ears ;
Such as a Poet hears,
With joy, and yet with tears,

In some ethereal revery, half vision and half
dream.

In breezy tree-tops jocund voices trilled,
And, deep in slumberous caverns of the
ocean,

Wild echo heard, and with an airy motion,
Tossed back the greeting of a heart o'er-
filled

With gladness, and that speaks it o'er and o'er,

Till bliss can say no more.

The waves, that whispered on the silver sands,
Told the glad secret unto many lands ;
And the stars heard, and blessed him, from
above,
With golden smiles of love.

IV.

All this transpired in mythologic days,
When Nature sympathized with Man,
And votaries were born to Pan,
For joy ordained, and for that Maker's praise.
Thus consecrated, grew the chosen child !
At first, as is the violet, mild,
Close clinging to the enamored earth
Wherefrom his being had its birth ;
A bud of hope, a triumph over death ;
Inhaling happiness with every breath,
And breathing blessings ere his little mouth
Attained the power to speak.

Then in the flight of hours
Gaining new powers,
His budding childhood bloomed at length
Into a perfect flower of beauty and of strength.
And then his spirit spread its wings
And bore him upward on the air of morn ;
Bathed in which vital fragrance he was
born
Into communion with all sensuous things.
His eyes beheld the world as one expanse
Of glory, — as a sea of bliss whereon
A sun of free and rippling splendor shone,
Kissing the silver waves in liquid dance.
And radiant o'er this tide a kingdom rose,
Shining from out the deep, — a land all bright
With visions, such as love and hope disclose,
Ere yet experience comes, in clouded night :
Gardens and palaces and tapering spires,
Sweet odors, sparkling founts, and softest
airs ;

Divinest music by seraphic choirs,
And loveliest ladies, singly or in pairs ;
Eternal summer-time, and all that 's best
In hope's celestial dream-land of the blest !
He saw, and, ravished at the sight,
Hungered for all he saw ;
Resolving that his own sweet will should be
his only law.
Thus Nature told him *half* her mystic truth, —
Life 's earliest good,
Not earliest understood, —
In one immortal utterance,
Youth !

v.

Ah, rosy time ! when heart and eyes
Are bright and warm with new desire ;
When o'er us broaden diamond skies,
And in us burns a heavenly fire ;
When Grandeur waves an august hand,
And points us to her empty throne ;

And Beauty, hard to understand,
By right divine seems all our own ;
When life is moonlight, love, and song,
And Cupid sends his darts by dozens ;
When to love cousins is not wrong,
And all the girls, of course, are cousins ;
When cross papas are waked at night
By flutes that toot beneath the casement ;
And dogs that bark but never bite
Charge out on lovers, from the basement ;
When geese are swans and sages bores,
And budding whiskers manhood's measure,
And tavern wines and tavern scores
The chief ingredients of pleasure ; —
When, in effect, it seems that we
Are gods — by mortals underrated —
Arriving, for felicity,
Into a world but just created !
Ah, could that rosy fire but burn
Till sextons toll the solemn parting,

No man on earth would ever learn
How great a fool he is at starting.

VI

Now, there 's no difference in the feather
That decks the several tribes of geese ;
And boys are boys, no matter whether
In ancient or in modern Greece.
And so it was my little hero,
When grown at length to youth's estate,
Wrote down his eager soul at zero
Before a beauteous female fate ;
In holy ardor burned,
And, with a lover's tender patience, learned
To worship and to wait.
It was the old, old tale, forever new
While hearts are noble and while faith is true.
For, evermore a glorious Far Away,
Where all our pure and sweet ideals dwell,
Preserves the record of one sacred day

When youthful passion wove its earliest spell ;
When angels spoke in every wind that blew,
And heaven itself seemed opening on our view,
And we were happy in bewildering bliss,
Crowned with a maiden's love, sealed with a
maiden's kiss.

His life was all enchantment ; in his veins
Flowed liquid fire, and in his violet eyes
Burned the unearthly light of mysteries
Breaking upon his soul, which spurned its
chains,
To rove, in realms of summer fancy, far,
And free, and brilliant as a wandering star.

VII.

And she, the Ionian queen, the pearl
Of beauty, — born to curse or bless,
The dusk, voluptuous, radiant girl,
The miracle of loveliness, —
What was she, that a Priest of Pan,

From sacred altars wooed to stray,
Should thus adore a child of man,
And cast immortal peace away?
Ah, youthful eyes are often dazed
By charms that age is fain to stare for;
While sober wisdom, much amazed,
Can neither tell the why nor wherefore!
To lovers only love is sane;
They comprehend its every antic, —
The hope, the fear, the doubt, the pain,
The pleasure sweet, the passion frantic;
While marvels the parental mind
That boys should pine in melancholy,
And wonders what on earth they find
In Annie, Julia, Bess, or Molly.
But, truth to tell, *this* paragon
Youth well might choose to be its goddess!
For splendor burned her brows upon,
And passion throbbed beneath her bodice.
And thus the enamored Pagan sung,

As, straying oft in lonely ways,
He nursed his hurt and breathed her praise,
The mountains and the vales among :

1.

Bring every rich and radiant hue
That earth and sky and sea unfurl ;
From flowers that gleam in silver dew,
From rainbow arches, clouds of pearl ; —
Bring all the diamond tints of morn,
The sheeted gold of gorgeous noon,
The wondrous pageants that adorn
The o'erwhelming sunset skies of June ;
The solemn starlight, sweetly pale ;
The lustre of the moonlit sea,
O'er which our raptured spirits sail,
In fancy's golden argosy ;
All that a poet dreams of grace !
All that a wandering wood-nymph sees ! —
You cannot match my darling's face
With any or with all of these .

2.

The mountain wind is not so fresh !

The lily's leaf is not so fair !

And, though a daughter of the flesh,

She seems a spirit of the air !

Her heart is fire, her eyes are flame :

Her presence dims the rainbow's sheen ;

Her brows would put a crown to shame ;

She moves, a Grace, and is a Queen !

Her voice is clear and sweet and strong

As winds that sport in summer's dawn,

And merrier than the wild-bird's song,

Where woodland brooks go murmuring on ;

But neither brook nor bird nor breeze,

Nor clouds that float, nor streams that run,

Nor flower nor fruit nor grass nor trees

Can thrill my soul as she has done.

VIII.

This, in the depth of his mysterious life,

Heard the calm earth-god, and his heart was
sore,

That one ordained his poet evermore
Should thus with fate be sinfully at strife.
And much he mused, and o'er his noble face,
Pure with eternal health, a shadow grew, —
A sternness foreign to its tender grace,
A sadness foreign to its sunny hue ;
For pity tempered justice in his breast,
And grief was there, — an unaccustomed guest.

IX.

Then rose a chorus sweet of mingled tones,
From trees, and running brooks, and earth, and
stones,
From mountains grim, and depth of lonely
dells, —
Where'er serene the sylvan spirit dwells, —
A wild, tumultuous tide of melody,
Which, kissed by echo, softly died away
Into one clear and solemn voice of song
Entrancing summer as it swept along : —

1.

Can he give away the freedom from the earth
he doth inherit,

The happiness and grandeur of a destiny sub-
lime ?

The wings of immortality, that lift his airy
spirit —

A victor over trouble and a monarch over
time ?

2.

Can he give away the fragrance of the dewy
morning roses ?

The lustre of the waters and the music of the
leaves ?

All the cloudy groves of heaven where the star
of love reposes ?

All the fragrant woodland places where the
waiting Naiad grieves ?

3.

Can he give away the promise of the beckoning
Ideal,

The pure and simple pleasure of an innocent
desire ?

Can he worship at the altars of the gross and
worldly Real,

And prefer a sordid passion to his own celes-
tial fire ?

4.

O, it cannot be he spurns the god who wrapt
his soul in splendor,

On whose bosom he was cradled in the bud-
ding of his years ;

Who has loved him with a love so vast, divinely
true and tender,

And whispered Nature's secrets in his rosy
little ears !

5.

No — 't is but the passing shadow of her dangerous, bad beauty, —

The blinding Siren of the World, who tempts but to betray.

I will shield him, I will save him, I will lead him back to duty ;

Through a solemn night of anguish he shall pass to sacred day.

6.

Let him wake from this delusion when abandoned in the hour

He learns that love, in worldly hearts, is but a film of lies ;

While the fire which burns within his own is holy in its power

To illumine the path of destiny and lift him to the skies.

X.

It fell as falls the angry summer's frown
On velvet-petaled flowers that thirst and die.
It fell, and withered all his proud renown, —
A shaming sense of base idolatry !
It fell upon his heart, and thus he knew
That whom the gods protect they punish too.
Then his frame wasted, and his vigor fled,
And beauty's gold was tarnished round his
head,
And all the currents of his life ran slow,
And his soul sunk and sickened 'neath the blow.
No more adorned in Tyrian dress
With emerald clasp and golden chain !
A wretched wreck, in sore distress,
He tottered through the streets with pain ;
And they, who knew him once, beheld with
scorn
The wanderer, broken, friendless, and forlorn.
And, seeing what had once been grand and fair

Was now o'erladen and o'erwhelmed with care,
Sinking in dire misfortune and despair,
Even she, the Ionian queen, the Pearl
Of Beauty, — known, alas, too late! —
Beheld him plunged in ruin's whirl,
And, sneering, left him to his fate.

XI.

Then madness seared his brain, and on his face
Wrote horror, and his frightened spirit fled
Through caves of pain, or in an arid place
Of desolation tottered, where the dead
Seemed gibbering round him; and, among
them, lo!
A phantom, beautiful beyond compare,
Who lured him with her eyes, and made him
swear
Eternal love, — then mocked him, in his woe.
He made the lofty mountain-tops his home,
The earth his bed, and shrieked in horrid
glee;

Nor feared in depth of darkest dells to roam,
Where prowled fierce beasts, — but not so
fierce as he.

At last the day came back, the storm was stilled,
And his worn reason woke to life again ;
And presently he knew the doom fulfilled
Of destiny, and all the past was plain.
He saw the withered fruit upon the ground,
But not the less he saw
This but a step in the eternal round
Of Nature's sacred law.
Thus, after darkness and despair,
Came sunshine and the morning air.

XII.

Then, touched by lightning of God's eyes,
He spake in prophecies,
Interpreting the earth, the sea, the skies, —
All that in Nature is of mystery,
All that in Man is dark ;

All that the golden future is to be,
When quenched this vital spark,
And souls imprisoned are at last set free.
Backward he looked across the eternal sea,
And on the ever-lessening shores of time
Saw ghosts of ruined empires, wandering
slow.

Then, looking forward, saw the radiant bow
Of promise, shining o'er a heavenly clime.

And thus he knew the messenger that brings
The knowledge of the nothingness of things ;
Thus Nature taught him *all* her mystic truth,—
Hope, the rich fruit of Youth,
And that wherein all doubt and trouble cease,
The fruit of patience,
Peace.

XIII.

At last came Death, a gentle, welcome guest,
And touched his hand, and led him into rest.
Time paid its tribute to eternity, —

A pure soul, ripe for the immortal day, —
And earth embraced his ashes : cold their bed,
For now the aged year was also dead.

The winter wind shrieked loud, in hoarse
alarms,

The keen stars shivered in the midnight air,
And the bare trees stretched forth their
stiffened arms

To the wan sky, in pale and speechless
prayer ;

Prayer o'er a new-made grave, where Naiads
kept

A solemn vigil, singing (and some wept) : —

Speak softly here, and softly tread,
For all the place is holy ground
Where Nature's love enshrines her dead,
And Earth with blessing folds them round.

Be not the sacred silence stirred,
That slumbers on his pallid brow,

By any rude, ungentle word
That mortal lips can utter now.

He rests at last ; the World, far off,
Runs riot, in her mad excess ;
But now her plaudit and her scoff
To him alike are nothingness.

A kind, true spirit this ! “Not good,”
The blind fools said. He went his way,
Admired, maligned, misunderstood,
Till glory closed his sombre day.

He learned in depths where virtue fell
The heights where honor may arise ;
He measured down the abyss of hell,
He scaled the walls of Paradise.

But all he felt and all he saw
Taught only (what the wild bird sings)
That law is peace, that love is law,
And lord of life, and king of kings.



NOTE.

“Love’s Ideal” — page 27 — contains these lines : —

And her voice is soft and low,
Clear as music, and as sweet;
Hearing it, you hardly know
Where the sound and silence meet.

Long after writing this, I met, for the first time, with the reference, in Knowles’s “*Virginius*,” to the voice of *Virginia*, so delicate

“That nothing comes ’twixt it and silence.”

“Accomplices.” Page 71. — For a literary reason, not necessary to be here stated, the author records that this poem was written and published in 1861.

“Black and Blue” — page 96 — was suggested to me by a sentence in Goethe’s “*Wilhelm Meister*”: “To look on a pair of bright black eyes is the life of a pair of blue ones.”

“The World’s Martyr” — page 106 — was written for public delivery. Hence the variety in the form of the verse, as also the introduction of facetious passages. It will be perceived that an inaccurate use has been made of the myth of Pan, that god being, for the purpose of the allegory, invested with spiritual sanctity. But it is hoped that this intentional error will be excused, in consideration of the truth which the poem aims to suggest. “The World’s Martyr” was spoken by me before the Literary Societies of Brown University, at Providence, Rhode Island.

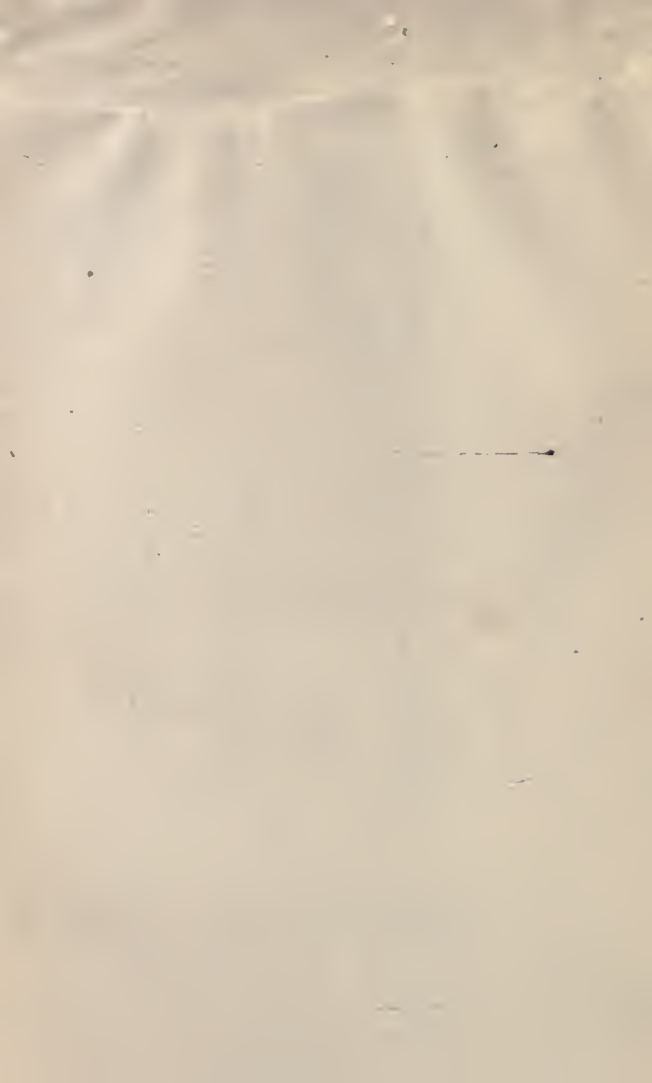
W. W.

FORT HILL, Staten Island, N. Y.,
August 24, 1871.









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